



TARRANT COUNTY ENGINEERING SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Guidelines for Development in the Unincorporated Areas of Tarrant County

Updated: May 2026

No Zoning Regulations

Separate from very specific types of development (e.g. salvage yards, wastewater treatment facilities, sexually oriented businesses, etc.), Tarrant County does not have the authority under state law to implement or enforce zoning. This letter serves as written verification that zoning regulations are not applicable to the unincorporated areas outside of any city limits.

Fire Code Requirements

The Tarrant County Fire Code applies to all new construction or substantial improvements of commercial buildings, public buildings and multifamily dwellings consisting of four or more units. Any building that is to be built after August 1, 2018 in the unincorporated areas of Tarrant County will be required to have a Construction Permit before the project can begin. No person may begin construction or make substantial improvements to a building in the unincorporated area of Tarrant County unless and until that person obtains a construction permit issued in accordance with the Tarrant County Fire Code. Projects requiring inspections for State Licensing also fall under the Tarrant County Fire Code. For more information you can contact the Tarrant County Fire Marshal's Office at 817-838-4660, email firemarshal@tarrantcountytx.gov or visit our web site at <http://www.tarrantcounty.com/en/fire-marshall.html>.

Reporting Forms for Residential Construction and Renovation

Tarrant County does not issue Building Permits or Certificates of Occupancy for residential homes. All new residential structures and improvements to existing residential structures that increase the square footage or value by more than fifty percent (50%) shall be constructed to the International Residential Code (IRC) published as of May 1, 2008, or the version of the IRC applicable to City of Fort Worth.

Tarrant County does not have the authority to perform building inspections or charge inspection fees; any builder is required to:

1. complete a [Notice of Residential Construction in Unincorporated Area](#) form and email it to tspermitting@tarrantcountytx.gov,
2. obtain three inspections during different phases of the construction; and
3. complete a [Notice of Residential Construction Inspection Compliance in Unincorporated Area](#) form and email it to tspermitting@tarrantcountytx.gov.

These reporting requirements are only applicable to any builders who are constructing a residential home for resale and do not apply to any property owners who are building a residential home to live in it. Failure to obtain the inspections is a Class C misdemeanor and Tarrant County may also file for an injunction against a builder who does not file the required reports.

Floodplain Construction

All development and new construction within a FEMA designated floodplain will require a floodplain permit prior to any work commencing. For more information you may call 817-884-1173. Floodplain Permit requests may require a flood study, depending on the individual situation: [Floodplain Permits](#)

Drainage Standards

Development of a subdivision or a plat that is located within the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) of the City of Fort Worth will be reviewed by the City according to drainage standards set forth by the City of Fort Worth.

Developments, both in and outside the ETJ of the City of Fort Worth, will be reviewed by Tarrant County for drainage standards according to the Tarrant County Subdivision and Land Use Regulations Manual. Although Tarrant County hasn't officially adopted the iSWM manual, we strongly recommend you follow the procedures and standards set forth within the manual. Additional information about iSWM can be found at [iSWM Information](#)

In instances where individual property owners are disputing drainage modifications or alterations that affect each other, Tarrant County will provide a contour map and a copy of the Texas Water Code, which may be utilized to initiate conversations between the two property owners to resolve the dispute. Tarrant County has no authority in these types of situations as they are deemed civil issues between two private property owners.

On-Site Sewage Facilities (OSSF)

The installations of new or modification of existing On-Site Sewage Facilities will require coordination with the Tarrant County Wastewater Specialist for a permit (817-212-7082). There are separation requirements between water wells and On-Site Sewage Facilities, regardless of property lines, so careful pre-planning, including consideration of facilities on neighboring properties, may be required. For general requirements, please refer to the rules: On-Site Sewage Facilities, [TAC Chapter 285](#). For more additional information or questions: [Tarrant County - OSSF's](#)

Storm Water Permit

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) requires a Construction Storm Water Permit for construction projects that disturbs at least one acre of land and where the storm water discharge flows into unincorporated Tarrant County. A copy of the Construction Site Notice or Notice of Intent must be mailed to Maria Moreno, Tarrant County Engineering Services Department, 100 E. Weatherford St, Suite 401, Fort Worth, Texas, 76196. For more information about permit requirements visit TCEQ's website at www.tceq.texas.gov. Questions regarding the rules and regulations as they pertain to unincorporated Tarrant County properties, contact Maria C. Moreno at 817-884-2634.

Water Wells

The Northern Trinity Groundwater Conservation District (NTGCD) has jurisdiction over groundwater in Tarrant County. Well registration, permitting, and drilling requirements can be viewed on the NTGCD website: [Northern Trinity Groundwater Conservation District](#) or call 817-249-2062.

Alarm Permits

If a residential home is located in the unincorporated area of Tarrant County, an alarm permit is required and can be obtained by contacting Josh Douglas with the Sheriff's office at 817-884-1323 or on the web at [Sheriff's Office Alarm Permit Information](#) Homes located in a municipality other than the unincorporated area of Tarrant County will need to coordinate with that jurisdiction for their regulations and requirements.

Solar Panel Installation Permits

If a residential home is located in the unincorporated area of Tarrant County, a permit for the installation of Solar Panels is not required. Homes located in an established subdivision in the unincorporated area of Tarrant County, should consult their deed restrictions and/or contact their HOA/POA. Homes located in a municipality other than the unincorporated area of Tarrant County will need to coordinate with that jurisdiction for their regulations and requirements.

Building Setbacks from County Roads and State Highways

Tarrant County does have building setback requirements so any building or structure should not be located within 25 feet from the edge of the right-of-way of any County Road or within 50 feet from the edge of the right-of-way of any State highway.

Encroachment Permits

Proposed property access connecting to a State maintained roadway requires a permit from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Please contact TxDOT at 817-370-6500 for any proposed improvements to be located in State Right-of-Way (ROW).

Proposed property access connecting to a County maintained roadway requires County review and approval. Please contact Tarrant County at 817- 884-1250 for any proposed improvements to be located in the County ROW. The encroachment permit may be accessed at the following link: [Driveway Permit](#)

Work in County Right of Way

Any property owners, or contractors performing any work within Tarrant County ROW will be required to obtain an encroachment permit from the following link or contact 817-884-1250 for more information: [Encroachment Permit](#)

Any utility company or contractor proposing to perform construction relating to a public utility with Tarrant County ROW will be required to obtain a Utility Permit from the following link or contact 817-884-1176 for more information: [Utility Permit](#)

Development in Proximity to the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth

Companies or individuals desiring to develop property and/or build in the unincorporated areas of Tarrant County within the Air Installations Compatible Use Zones (AICUZ) should review the information pertaining to compatible development around the military base, which can be found at: [Military-Community Planning](#)

No Authority over Deed Restrictions and HOA/POA Rules

Some properties in the unincorporated areas of Tarrant County may be subject to deed restrictions and/or home or property owner association (HOA or POA) rules which may limit what can be done on the property. Tarrant County does not have the authority to enforce deed restrictions and HOA/POA rules. Tarrant County does not get involved in civil disputes between private property owners, HOAs/POAs, and developers related to deed restrictions or HOA/POA rules.

Additional Questions and Contacts

The issues listed above are not exhaustive of all requirements or regulations enforced by Tarrant County but are representative of typical inquiries that we receive. For more information, please visit our webpage [Tarrant County Engineering Services Department](#).

Please direct any other development or planning related questions to:

Nicole Benoit, Development Coordinator
817-212-7202
nrbenoit@tarrantcountytx.gov

Please direct any other construction or engineering related questions to:

Joseph Jackson, Director/County Engineer
817-884-1173
jjackson@tarrantcountytx.gov
or
Travis Rosenbaum, Deputy Director
817-884-1177
tsrosenbaum@tarrantcountytx.gov